

Working Together

Issue 20
Summer 2005



WARREN PARK PHOTO



A Message from the Director

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The VA Pittsburgh Working Together

(1999-2005)

is published for the employees,
volunteers, patients and friends of
the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.
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Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of the VAPHS,

JUST behind the University Drive Division of the VAPHS, begins an outer edge of buildings that are part of the sprawling campus of the University of Pittsburgh. The VAPHS is extremely proud to have this diverse university community as neighbors, and for over 28 years the University has been an ally in advancing the care of the veterans we serve.

Since 1977, the VAPHS has been a successful major teaching hospital, partially due to the strong affiliation and partnership with the University. Currently there are 104 VAPHS physicians who also maintain a dual appointment with the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

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From the roof of the University Drive Division, part of the University of Pittsburgh can be seen, including the new Petersen Events Center and the School of Medicine.

Through this active affiliation and partnership, over 500 University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine residents, interns, and students are trained at the VAPHS each year. The VAPHS also has strong affiliations with the Schools of Nursing, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Social Work, and Psychology.

While fulfilling the VA's mission of providing education and advancing the future of health care, this thriving academic affiliation facilitates the leveraging of resources and enhances the quality of services provided to veterans.

This Summer issue of *Working Together* features an article on a revolutionary initiative to reduce hospital-acquired infections to zero and the introduction of our newest community based outpatient clinic. It also spotlights the many outstanding achievements and milestones of our staff.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Moreland

Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Vital Signs

Fayette County Community Based Outpatient Clinic Open!

The VAPHS’ newest Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) began seeing patients on Monday, March 7, 2005.

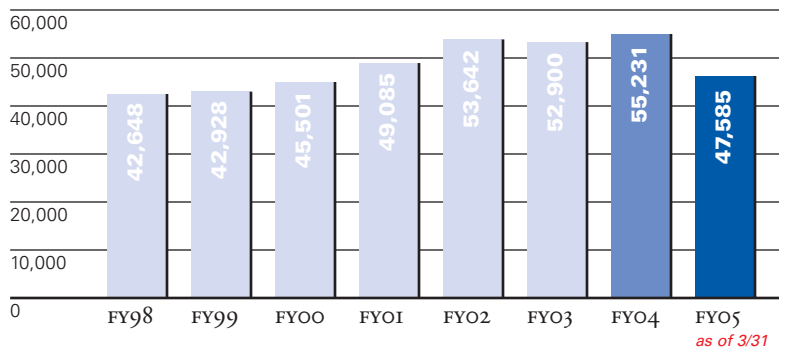
The clinic is managed by the VAPHS and operated by Magnum Medical Personnel, Joint Venture. It is anticipated that this \$4.4 million dollar, five-year contract will serve an anticipated 1,800 veterans in the first year alone.

This fifth VAPHS CBOC offers coordination of care by a primary care provider, physical examinations, general outpatient medical care to include lab and pharmacy, podiatry, dietician, non-invasive radiology, women veterans health services, mental health services and preventative health and education services. With a full compliment of physicians and clinical support providers, the goal of the CBOC is to be able to provide the majority of our veterans’ primary care needs. The specialized care and procedures for the veterans of Fayette County and the surrounding area will continue to be provided at one of the three divisions of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

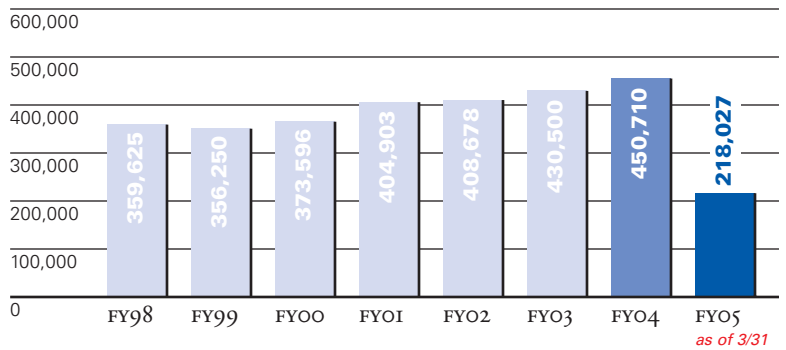


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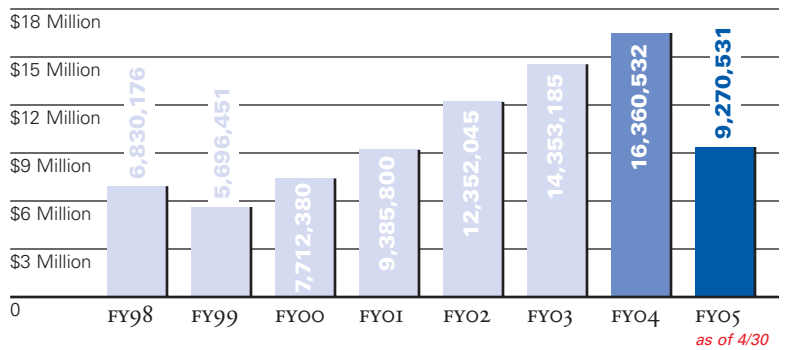
UNIQUE PATIENTS



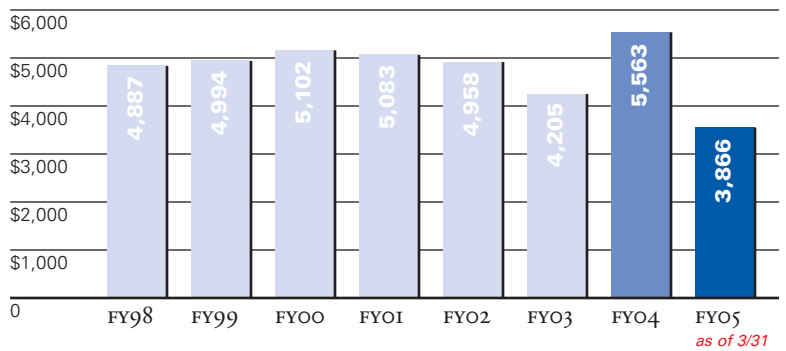
OUTPATIENT VISITS



MEDICAL CARE COST RECOVERY



OBLIGATIONS/UNIQUE PATIENT





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The goal of the Getting to Zero project on 4-West is to completely eliminate MRSA-related infections and revolutionize inpatient care.

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is an antibiotic-resistant bacteria that causes many health care-associated infections. *S. aureus* is found on the skin or in the nose. When skin is cut or scraped, the bacteria can enter the body and cause a common skin infection. When introduced into the body, *S. aureus* can cause pneumonia, wound or bloodstream infections. MRSA is primarily spread by direct physical contact with a person or object that carries the bacteria.

VAPHS (4-West) Initiatives to "Get to Zero"

Achieving high compliance with hand hygiene is the first step in eliminating microorganism transmission and so has become an integral component in all precautions. Health care workers on 4-West and throughout the VAPHS are now expected to perform hand hygiene on entry and exit from a patient room, between patients in the same room, and between procedures on the same patient. Dispensers of alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer are placed in each patient room because they are not only more convenient than hand washing but also more effective.

Educational handouts are given to visitors to encourage them to help prevent the spread of MRSA. 4-West employees encourage families and visitors to perform hand hygiene on entry and exit when visiting a patient room. When a family member or visitor assists with patient care requiring intensive contact like bathing or dressing changes, they are guided by the RN to follow the same precautions required of the hospital staff.

All patients are tested when they enter and leave the unit to determine if they are MRSA carriers and need to be isolated. A floor plan is established to designate rooms targeted to receive MRSA carriers thus avoiding inconvenience for the patient and extra work for the staff to relocate patients. A sign is placed outside the patient's room alerting entrants to the required precautions.

There are convincing clinical studies that show MRSA transmission cannot be eliminated without using gowns to prevent health care workers' clothing from becoming contaminated by the microorganism. Unfortunately, since putting on a gown requires several extra seconds, it is one precaution that is often neglected. Lines on the floor of isolation rooms clearly mark the infectious "hot zones," to remind workers that they must be gowned when crossing them. Gowns are made immediately available and visible at the point of entry of isolation rooms. In addition, continuous training and awareness about resistant organism transmission has improved compliance.

Equipment that comes in contact with patients or their environment has the potential to become a vector of transmission. Wheelchairs for example, are frequently used equipment that can transmit microorganisms. VAPHS has developed and instituted a system for keeping them clean. Stethoscopes can also carry microorganisms. To reduce the risk of microorganism transmission, bright red scopes are placed in the rooms of patients in contact precautions. These stay in the room and are not shared between patients. When the patient is discharged, the stethoscope is sent to sterile processing for cleaning. The distinct red color reminds the staff not to remove the stethoscope from the room. Disposable blood pressure cuffs are also available in all of the isolation rooms, eliminating the need to soak the woven fabric of blood pressure cuffs to remove microorganisms.

Disinfecting wipes and holders are available throughout 4-West and the VAPHS. The convenience of these is critical to supporting the disinfection of equipment before it is stored for reuse. Staff of 4-West also redesigned their clean and dirty equipment rooms. Nurses decided that the standard would be to place equipment in the Clean

Equipment Room only after it had been cleaned. When RNs need equipment from the clean room, they are assured that it is clean and ready for use. The room is lined with signs on the walls displaying a picture of the equipment that is to be stowed below it and any necessary instructions, such as “Always needs to be plugged in.”

Across from every inpatient bed is a framed poster stating, “Patients, You have a Right to Clean Hands. Please remind everyone to sanitize or wash their hands when entering or exiting the room.” The poster is in prominent view, reminding health care workers of the expected standard of hand hygiene and prompting patients to speak up about hand hygiene lapses.

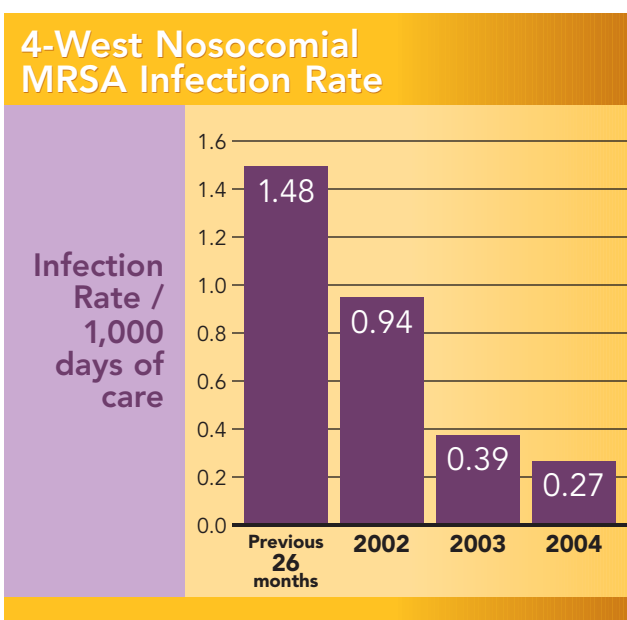
Staff of 4-West also deploy a system of visual management boards to facilitate communication and better coordinate the flow of current information regarding patient, appointments, RNs and MDs caring for the patient, and room status. The boards are color-coded, constantly updated, and highly adaptable as the information is posted with white board markers or magnetic sign strips. Beds that are available, occupied, or in some phase of cleaning are noted.

A lack of time can be one of the biggest challenges health care workers face. Therefore, 4-West has devised ways to address this. The 4-West staff played an integral role in creating the hospital’s new wheelchair supply system. Nurses no longer spend time hunting for wheelchairs. In addition, reliability of supply at the point of need has been a key enabler of improved precaution compliance. The current system of supply was comprised with a clear goal to never require that health care workers interrupt patient care to hunt for precaution supplies, such as gloves or gowns.

Staff education is also an important element of infection control. Health care workers on 4-West are provided with educational sessions that explain nosocomial infections and MRSA awareness, principles of MRSA transmission, hand hygiene, and precaution practices in addition to other elements. Many improvements on the unit are also suggested and tested by front-line workers before implementation.

How does this joint project with the Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative (PRHI) work?

The VA Pittsburgh has partnered with PRHI and the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) to apply principles of work redesign and organizational learning to prevent MRSA. These principles come from the Toyota



Production System and have been adapted by PRHI for health care under the name “Perfecting Patient Care.”

PRHI has provided facilitators to help coach the VA’s implementation of these principles in the prevention of MRSA. The collaboration believes that the key to preventing MRSA infections is preventing the spread of MRSA in the first place.

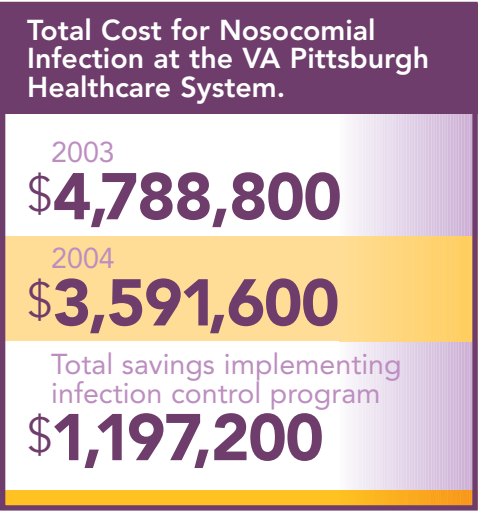
The TPS Contribution to the Unit’s Success

Principles of the Toyota Production System (TPS) have been applied on the unit in a systematic approach to problem solving and collaboration. TPS was born of the needs of the Toyota Motor Corporation after WWII to close a productivity gap with the U.S., operate with a severe capital shortage and sell to a small, diverse market. The outcomes of TPS deployment are superior product and service quality, short lead-time, low cost and a safe working environment (physically, professionally and emotionally).

TPS applied to health care is grounded in two paramount values: satisfying patient needs (including patient safety) and providing health care workers with meaningful work. Problems are identified and solved at the point of patient care.

The TPS implementation is supported by a TPS training consultant from PRHI, and funding and consulting from the CDC.

Regina Russell, Staff Nurse on 4-West, demonstrates the productivity of a newly designed supply room.



SPOTLIGHT ON Presidential Management Fellows Program

THE PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO ATTRACT OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS UPON COMPLETING THEIR GRADUATE DEGREES FROM A WIDE VARIETY OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES TO TRAIN AS FUTURE MANAGERS WITHIN THE FEDERAL SERVICE.

It is a two-year fellowship program, intended to provide federal sector managerial experience through rotations, front line experience, and active mentoring. These experiences create the opportunity to be a permanent manager in the Federal civil service following their successful fellowship.

The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System currently employs three Presidential Management Fellows.



Kimberly Makovetz began working at the VAPHS in June 2004. She is currently serving as Acting Administrative Officer for the Medical Specialty Service Line.

She has previously served as the Special Assistant to the Director and Administrative Assistant to the Acting Vice President of Facilities Management.

Kim received a master's degree in public administration from the University of Pittsburgh. She also received a bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in economics and received a Conceptual Foundations in Medicine Certificate from the University of Pittsburgh. Her hometown is Allentown, Pennsylvania.

LaToya J. Miller began working at the VAPHS in July 2004. She is currently serving as the Surgical Specialty Service Line Supervisor of Medical Support Assistants and as an Assistant to the Advanced Clinic Access Coordinator.

She has previously served as a Data Analyst and Special Assistant to the Associate Director.

LaToya received a Master of Public Health from Mercer School of Medicine and a Bachelor of the Arts in English from Vanderbilt University. She is currently a Doctorate of Public Health Candidate at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. Her hometown is Atlanta, Georgia.



Jessica Morris began working at the VAPHS in August 2003. She currently serves as the Acting Administrative Officer for Patient Care Services.

She has previously served as Executive Assistant to the Associate Director, Acting Administrative Officer for Facilities Management, and Public Affairs and Administrative Officer for the Office of Major Construction. Jessica also writes capital asset applications for other medical centers within the VISN.

Jessica has bachelor's degrees in political science and communications from the State University of New York at Cortland and a master's degree in public administration from George Washington University. Her hometown is Syracuse, New York.



WARREN PARK PHOTOS

Mailbox

Dear Mr. Moreland,

My son, W.I., recently was a patient at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Highland Drive Division, 1-3 West. While he was there, receiving excellent treatment from the unit's staff, I visited and also made several phone calls to the staff and my son.

As a mother, it was a nervous period for me. I feel you should know how fortunate the VA is in having employee, Pat Solomon. She was a great source of comfort to me each time I called. She remembered my name and always asked how my son was doing in a genuine, compassionate, caring way.

She represents a great spokesperson for the VA and has a sincere concern for our veterans and their families. I would appreciate your letting her know how much my conversations with her were of comfort to me.

Sincerely,

—M.I.

P.S. My son continues to be doing well with his treatment program.

Dear Mr. Director,

I just wanted to let you know about my present stay at the VA hospital in Pittsburgh.

I would like to start with Dr. Demas and one of his assistants, Kim. Both are G-R-E-A-T. Robert, the nurse in Same Day Surgery was very, very helpful. Though he didn't have to, he took the extra time to do an early call to wake me for my surgery this morning. The nurse (unfortunately I didn't get her name) in Recovery was wonderful – great attitude!

Then there's Lori and Dave on the 9th floor. What a great team! They bend over backwards to help a vet. They keep things light, yet highly professional.

Being in the VA system for over ten years, I have seen A LOT. But the overall care I have received here in Pittsburgh is by far the best I have ever received. This includes the doctor in nuclear medicine. I feel this is a direct reflection of the leadership you portray.

As for the Hoptel – what an improvement! Not only are the rooms nicer, but the staff is very cordial as well.

You should be proud of the team of people you have assembled.

Upon my return, I will e-mail Arlen Specter to relay the feelings I have toward this great institution.

—H.P.B.

Dear Mr. Moreland:

On January 23, I went to 9W to get prepared for a medical procedure. There was an RN, Vince DiBucci, who gave me such excellent care. He explained things to me that I wasn't aware of and made the procedure a lot easier.

It's always good to have such caring nurses and the VA has a lot of them. We veterans appreciate everything the VA does for us.

Will you please make sure Mr. DiBucci is recognized and commended for a "job well done"?

Thank you kindly,

—S.S.

EMPLOYEES WITH 20 years

OR **more** OF SERVICE!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period February 1, 2005 through April 31, 2005.

40 years

Donna L. Pomaybo
Patient Care Services

35 years

Dianne L. Gedman
Business Service

Harry L. Lippert, Jr.
Facilities Management

Margaret M. Whipkey
Information Resource Management

30 years

Melanie A. Hutskow
Chief of Staff Office

Michael J. Pilewski
Medical Specialty

Phyllis E. Householder
Surgical Specialty

25 years

Thomas G. Zubal
Associate Director/Police

Hai P. Giap
Behavioral Health

Mary E. Evans
Clinical Support

Gary Dudley
Community Based Care

John L. Griffin
Community Based Care

Peggy Williams-Smith
Community Based Care

Thomas F. Kalarski
Facilities Management

James H. Davis, Jr.
Facilities Management

Harold W. Reichert
Facilities Management

Barry J. Schreffler
Facilities Management

Judith A. Jerry
Human Resources

20 years

Jamie Slater
Nutrition & Food

Ginny L. Haynos
Behavioral Health

James K. Yost
Behavioral Health

Steve R. Haynos
Business Service

Monica A. Wilson
Business Service

Martin L. Hampton, Jr.
Clinical Support

Cynthia M. Heinl
Clinical Support

Rebecca S. Hough
Clinical Support

Nadia N. Lowe
Clinical Support

Tori L. Walker
Director's Office

Elinor G. Eversole
Geriatrics & Extended Care

Judy M. Zubal
Human Resources

Tauna L. Perenovich
Information Resource Management

Marlene V. Hill
Medical Specialty

Michael P. Masciantonio
Medical Specialty

Robert J. Monte
Medical Specialty

Suzette F. Hardy
Patient Care Services

Rita Saunders
Patient Care Services

CONGRATULATIONS!



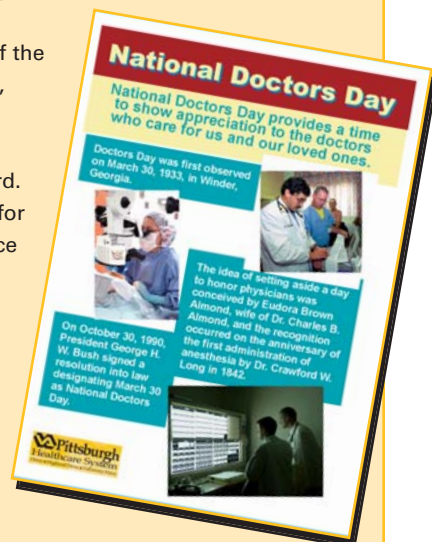
WARREN PARK PHOTO



◀ VAPHS Outstanding Physician of the Year Award

National Doctors Day is celebrated each year on March 30 to show appreciation to America's physicians for caring for the sick, promoting health, and advancing medical knowledge. This year the VAPHS established an Outstanding Physician of the Year Award in conjunction with National Doctors Day, to recognize the outstanding contributions that were made by a VAPHS physician. This was the first time that this award was presented and it will be repeated on an annual basis.

Chester B. Good, MD, of the Primary Care Service Line, was the 2005 recipient of the VAPHS Outstanding Physician of the Year Award. Dr. Good was recognized for his dedication to excellence in patient care and his outstanding contributions to education, research, performance improvement and innovations in health care. Dr. Good facilitated the development of many new clinical initiatives that have improved the quality, access, cost, customer satisfaction and outcomes of health care delivery for our veterans. Dr. Good was commended for his exemplary leadership, high professional and ethical standards, and commitment to "Putting Veterans First."



Gerald Goldstein, Ph.D., ABPP, recently reached the benchmark of 50 years of government service! ▶

Dr. Goldstein, Senior Career Research Scientist at the VAPHS, and Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, is known by most staff as primarily a researcher, but is also known to colleagues and students as a clinician and teacher. Although he is a licensed psychologist, he has been associated with the research service here for over 30 years, beginning with his establishment of a neuropsychology research program in 1975. At the same time, he was the administrator for one of the neuropsychiatric units for many years. He is among the world's best-known neuropsychologists, and was responsible for providing the first formal algorithms (that is, standardized combinations of neuropsychological tests results) to help in neuropsychiatric diagnosis. He was also one of the two psychologists to establish neuropsychological practice and research at the University of Pittsburgh three decades ago, and with his input, helped to recruit future clinicians and researchers to develop Pittsburgh as one of the premier neuropsychology centers in the country.

In addition to his training of numerous psychologists who have gone on to become outstanding research clinicians, he has also served on the Merit Review Board of the VA, and has been president of the two most prestigious organizations in his field, the International Neuropsychological Society and the National Academy of Neuropsychology. He is widely published, with over 200 articles and book chapters since 1961, has been editor of numerous books covering neuropsychology and diagnostic assessment, and was the founding editor of the journal *Neuropsychology Review*.



WARREN PARK PHOTO